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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 TEL AVIV 006550

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/REA, NEA/IPA, AND OES/PCI
DEPT PASS AID FOR ANE/WILSON AND EGAT/OBRIEN
EPA FOR INTERNATIONAL/FIDLER AND MEDEARIS
USDA FOR FAS/ICD/RSED SYLVANA LI
USDOC FOR 4520/MAC/ANESA/HVINEYARD
USDOC FOR 4521/MAC/ANESA/CLOUSTANAU/NWIEGLER
USDOC FOR 3131/USFCS/OIO/ANESA/DHARRIS/GLITMAN

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV TBIO KSQA EIND PGOV PREL IS ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY ISRAEL RELATIONS](#)

SUBJECT: ISRAELI MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT WANTS TO WORK WITH
U.S. EPA

REF: TEL AVIV 5567

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

1. (SBU) Summary: Israeli Ministry of Environment officials hope to work closely with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to make progress on some of Israel's most challenging environment problems. Those include: asbestos and hazardous waste cleanups, emergency preparedness, water security, and coastal management. MoE is prepared to discuss funding arrangements with EPA. Israel has new legislation on coastal management and the handling of biosolids. End summary.

2. (SBU) NEA Senior S&T Advisor Charles Lawson, accompanied by ESTH Officer, met December 6 with MoE Director General Miki Haran, Senior Deputy DG for Policy and Planning Valerie Brachya, and International Relations Director Ori Livne. Those officials stated that they would like to draw on the EPA's experience and expertise to help address some of Israel's toughest environmental problems.

3. (SBU) The MoE officials identified the following areas for potential cooperation with the EPA:

-- Asbestos Cleanups: Israel is facing both "tear-downs and tear-outs," is looking to "train trainers," and could use assistance in certifying asbestos inspectors.

-- Emergency Preparedness and First Responder Planning and Training: MoE has made a lot of progress on responding to hazardous substances incidents, including marine-related incidents, but would welcome the opportunity to compare experiences with the EPA.

-- Hazardous Waste Handling: The cleanup effort at the Ramat Hovav hazardous waste disposal site in the Negev is proceeding, but there is much more to be done. The effort generates its own cash flow as companies looking to dispose of hazardous wastes are charged according to a set fee structure. Related international tenders will be made public "soon."

-- Water Security: The MoE is interested in comparing experiences with EPA on water supply security and other homeland security areas in which the EPA has involvement.

-- Coastal Management: MoE officials are interested in U.S. policymaking related to coastal erosion.

4. (SBU) The MoE officials noted that Israel is moving forward to implement new legislation to protect the environment, including a coastal management law and another on the handling of biosolids. The latter will go into effect over the next two years, under the guidance of a committee with representatives from the Water Commission and the Ministries of Health, Agriculture, and Environment. One aim will be to treat all water to a minimum level appropriate for agricultural use. Higher treatment standards will add a few cents per cubic meter to the cost of water. The GOI is moving towards decisions on new treatment standards, including for removal of salt and brine at the water source. On coastal management, a key concern is erosion due to decreases in the amount of sand carried up the coast by prevailing currents.

5. (SBU) Comment: As DG Haran noted, environmental consciousness is becoming more popular, both among the public and politicians. The Knesset Environmental Caucus is now a strong group, with multi-party representation, she said. MoE staff "used to be seen as extremists," but are now in the middle. Green groups are learning they can get more traction by linking environmental and social issues, e.g. public use of open spaces. In this period of new momentum to protect the environment, MoE is eager to take

advantage of EPA's deep experience with the tough cleanup challenges Israel is facing. International Relations Director Livne said that the Ministry could make funding available to support work by EPA to help Israel solve key environmental problems like asbestos and hazardous waste cleanups, including by drawing from waste-handling fees charged to firms for the disposition of hazardous wastes. Livne commented that in some areas, especially hazardous waste disposal, "Israel definitely needs help and can't do it alone."

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